

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 128114 TOSEC 130248

EXDIS FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON

FOLLOWING REPEAT BEIRUT 4536 ACTION SECSTATE 24 MAY

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4536

EXDIS

FOR SECRETARY FROM MELOY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE

SUBJECT: CONTACT WITH CHRISTIAN LEADERS

REF: BEIRUT 4436

1. AS SCHEDULED, WARING SPENT WEEKEND MAY 22-23 IN JOUNIE TO
EXTEND MY GREETINGS TO THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS, EXPLAIN MY STAND ON
CREDENTIALS, DO SOME HANDHOLDING AND TAKE A SOUNDING. HE CALLED
ON THE PATRIARCH AND SPOKE (INTER ALIA) TO FRANGIE'S SECURITY CHIEF
COL. ANTOINE DAHDAH (BROTHER OF FRANGIE'S CONFIDENT LUCIEN, WHO
IS STILL IN PARIS), PIERRE GEMAYEL'S SON BACHIR, AND FATHER
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KASSIS' DEPUTY, FATHER NAMAAN. ARRANGEMENTS TO TALK WITH

CHAMOUN'S SON DANY FELL THROUGH, BUT A MESSAGE OF GREETING FROM ME WAS TRANSMITTED BY TELEPHONE. (CONSIDERING SOME OF CHAMOUN'S RECENT REMARKS, I DO NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF HIS HAVING DELIBERATELY FAILED TO RESPOND.) THE EXPLANATION ON CREDENTIALS, I.E., I DO NOT WISH TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF INTERFERING WITH A CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS IN TRAIN, WAS MUCH BETTER ACCEPTED THAN I HAD ANTICIPATED, ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO TELLING HOW FRANGIE REACTED WHEN DAHDAH REPORTED BACK TO HIM.

2. ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE, THERE SEEMS TO BE ALMOST TOTAL IGNORANCE AS TO FRANGIE'S INTENTION ON RESIGNATION. MANY ASSUME ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN WORKED OUT BETWEEN FRANGIE AND SARKIS (WHICH WE KNOW IS NOT THE CASE). FURTHERMORE, FRANGIE'S FAILURE TO RESIGN IS EMOTIONALLY ACCEPTED BY MANY AS A MEANS OF DEFENSE AGAINST JUMBLATT AND THE LEFT, WITH LITTLE REGARD TO THE PRACTICAL EFFECT OF FURTHER DELAY ON THE MAN WHO IS SUPPOSED TO REPRESENT THE CHRISTIAN INTERESTS FOR THE NEXT SIX YEARS. THE PREOCCUPATION WITH JUMBLATT AND THE LEFT, AGGRAVATED BY THE JALLUD VISIT, IS BECOMING ALMOST A FIXATION. A PLAN IS BEING CONSIDERED OF TRYING TO TIE IN FRANGIE'S RESIGNATION WITH A WRITTEN STATEMENT BY JUMBLATT THAT HE "RECOGNIZES" SARKIS'S ELECTION, OBVIOUSLY A RATHER DANGEROUS IDEA IN THAT IT PRESUMES ONE HAS A CHOICE IN THE MATTER. (JUMBLATT IN FACT HAS NEVER SAID THAT HE DID NOT RECOGNIZE SARKIS' ELECTION.) FORTUNATELY THOSE PUSHING IT ARE BECOMING MORE AWARE OF THE DISADVANTAGES.

3. ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, THE EMOTIONALISM THAT ENCOURAGES A DELAY IN RESIGNATION IS COUNTERBALANCED IN CERTAIN CASES BY SOME CLEAR THINKING THAT TIME IS WORKING IN FAVOR OF THE LEFT AND THAT A DELAY IN RESIGNATION IS WEAKENING SARKIS' POSITION. ONE OF THE LEADING MONKS SAID THAT HE HAD CONCLUDED THAT, IF THINGS WENT ON, SARKIS COULD BECOME IRRELEVANT LIKE GENERAL AHDAB. HE WAS PREPARED TO WORK FOR FRANGIE'S RESIGNATION THEREFORE, (WITHIN A FRAMEWORK OF ALL DUE DIGNITY AND RESPECT) THE MOMENT SARKIS GAVE THE WORD.

4. THE ROLE OF THE MONKS, BY THE WAY, IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT. EACH VISIT TO JOUNIE MAKES THIS MORE EVIDENT. THEY ARE WELL ORGANIZED AND VERY EFFECTIVE, NOT ONLY IN THE POLITICAL AND INTELLECTUAL FIELDS, BUT ALSO IN THE PRACTICAL FIELD OF CONFIDENTIAL

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DAY-TO-DAY LIFE. THEY ARRANGE FOR THE IMPORTATION OF GASOLINE (AND OTHER SUPPLIES), RAISE LARGE SUMS OF MONEY, TAKE CARE OF REFUGEES, PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION, ETC. THEY FULLY ADMIT THAT THEY WERE MAINLY RESPONSIBLE FOR ENCOURAGING ARMED CHRISTIAN RESISTANCE. NOW THEY SAY THEY ARE PUSHING DIALOGUE. THEIR THINKING IS FREQUENTLY OUTLANDISH, IF NOT MUCH WORSE AT TIMES, BUT LESS SO IF YOU TALK TO THEM THAN IF YOU DO NOT. THEIR INFLUENCE AMONG THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS, PARTICULARLY THE PHALANGE, IS

SIGNIFICANT, AND IT IS NO IDLE BOAST WHEN THEY SAY THEY COULD REMOVE FRANGIE IN 48 HOURS.

5. ANOTHER POSITIVE ELEMENT IS THAT DIALOGUE IS CONTINUING. BACHIR GEMAYEL HAD A FOUR-HOUR SESSION WITH ARAFAT'S DEPUTY, ABOU HASSAN, ON MAY 22 THAT HE TERMED "VERY FRUITFUL." HE EXPECTS ONE MORE SESSION WITH A JUMBLATT REPRESENTATIVE BEFORE A TOP MEETING ATTENDED BY PIERRY GEMAYEL AND JUMBLATT. HE BELIEVES DIALOGUE IS POSSIBLE NOW BECAUSE A "BALANCE OF TERROR" HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED. WHATEVER THE REASON, IT IS THE MONKS WHO HAVE BEEN GROOMING HIM FOR DIALOGUE, FOLLOWING THEIR OWN DIRECT APPROACH TO JUMBLATT. MOREOVER, AS SUBSEQUENTLY ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY BY PIERRE GEMAYEL, THERE ARE NO DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BACHIR'S THINKING AND THAT OF THE PARTY'S POLITBURO.

6. THE PATRIARCH WAS REFRESHINGLY OPEN AND REASONABLE AS USUAL. THE FIGHTING MUST STOP, IT WAS IN NO ONE'S INTEREST TO CONTINUE. FRANGIE OWED IT TO HIS COUNTRY TO STEP DOWN.

7. IN CONTRAST WITH THE PATRIARCH, THE REPORTS ON CHAMOUN ARE DEPRESSING. NOTORIOUS IN THE PAST FOR DEALING IN ALMOST EVERYTHING, CHAMOUN HAS NOW THROWN CAUTION TO THE WIND AND HAS SIMPLY TAKEN OVER THE JOUNIE PORT, WHERE HE IS GETTING HIS CUT ON EVERYTHING IN A SORT OF MAFIA-LIKE STYLE. (THIS IS AN OPEN TOPIC OF CONVERSATION.) WHETHER HE FEELS HE HAS TO COUNTERBALANCE HIS VENALITY BY A SHOW OF SUPER-PATRIOTISM, OR WHETHER HE IS SIMPLY RELUCTANT TO GIVE UP A GOOD THINK THAT HE NOW HAS GOING, HE IS ACTIVELY ENCOURAGING FRANGIE NOT TO RESIGN.

8. FINALLY, MUCH FAVORABLE INTEREST WAS RAISED BY THE FRENCH PROPOSAL FOR SENDING TROOPS. (THIS WAS SOON FOLLOWED IN OTHER QUARTERS BY STRONG OBJECTIONS, THUS SHARPENING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES BY YET ANOTHER ISSUE.) SOME OF THE CHRISTIAN

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LEADERS, HOWEVER, DID SPOT THE "CATCH 22" CLAUSE IN THE FRENCH OFFER ("IF ALL PARTIES AGREE") AND, WITH THE REFERENCE TO PRESIDENT-ELECT SARKIS, ALSO A PROBABLY INTENDED INVITATION TO FRANGIE TO RESIGN.

MELOY
UNQUOTE SISCO

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